



# The Chat



Kerncrest Audubon Society, Ridgecrest, California

May 2007

## **MAY CALENDAR**

Thu	Apr 26	8am	Cow Heaven Spring
Fri	Apr 27	5am	Beginning of Kern River Valley Spring Nature Festival
Fri	May 4	8am	Swap Meet
Sun	May 6	?am	Birdathon
Thu	May 10	7pm	Board Meeting, Brubakers'
Thu	May 17	7pm	Annual Meeting

## **GENERAL MEETING LOVING THE SIERRA**

Occasional mountain guide, amateur photographer, and Friends of the Inyo Wilderness steward Todd Vogel shares some of his experiences and photos from twenty years guiding mountaineering and public stewardship trips in the Eastern Sierra. Come enjoy photos of the Sierra from places most of us rarely have seen, including some of the Sierra's fantastic backcountry skiing, and learn how you can help maintain and restore our wilderness today for tomorrow's generations.

Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, at the Maturango Museum.

## **COW HEAVEN**

Once a year we go to Cow Heaven Canyon to check on and do maintenance (if necessary) on our Bird and Wildlife watering station at the spring. This year we've selected Thursday April 26<sup>th</sup> as the date to go. All members are welcome to join this always-enjoyable outing. We'll meet at 0800 at the Inyokern Post Office parking lot for car-pooling. Bring a snack or lunch in case the weather is so good that we want to stick around afterward for some birding. Speaking of weather, if the weather does not look so good on the 26<sup>th</sup>, call Lee Sutton at 375-1981 to see if we might decide to cancel.

Lee Sutton

## **BIRDATHON**

The 18<sup>th</sup> annual Kerncrest Audubon Society BIRDATHON will be held Sunday, May 6<sup>th</sup>. We need you to form a team - even if it's only a team of one - and sign up sponsors to contribute in support of the Kern River Preserve and our education programs. If you'll join or form a team, phone Lee Sutton at 375-1981. Teams may meet at any time or place they like, but it's best to let Lee know your tentative plans so that he can provide a "clearing house" to ensure maximum coverage of the area to maximize the number of species seen.

See the enclosed letter and sponsor sign-up sheet to help you enlist sponsors.

We'll bird for 24 hours (you need not do so continuously of course, so relax and enjoy) starting at 6:00 PM Saturday evening and ending at 6:00 PM on the 6<sup>th</sup>. At that time we'll adjourn to somewhere, likely John's Pizza Parlor, (though we're told they may charge a \$5 per person minimum) to compare and consolidate species lists and to celebrate. Call 375-1981 to find out where the round-up is.

Lee Sutton

## **KERNCREST OFFICER ELECTIONS**

As reported at the March 15, 2007 general meeting, the nominating committee for the semiannual election of officers has selected a suite of candidates. The nominees selected are:

for President	Sherry Brubaker
for Vice President	Lee Sutton
for Secretary	Noel Gravelle
for Treasurer	Phil Archibald

The election will occur at our annual meeting on Thursday, May 17, at 7pm at the Maturango Museum. Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor at that time.

Lee Sutton

# Garage Sale Help Wanted .

# See page 3.



**Valley Sightings –March–April 2007**  
*Please report unusual sightings to Susan Steele at 377-5220 (home) or 939-1722 (work), or by email at [steele7@verizon.net](mailto:steele7@verizon.net).*

## March

Five **Greater White-fronted Geese** have been seen at Pearson Park, SE Ridgecrest, and the ponds from Mar 1 –Mar 29 (BBu, BB, LS, SS, DP).

Almost 700 **Snow Geese** were still in the valley Mar 16(SS) with 225 reported Mar 25 (BB) and 15 on Mar 29 (SS). And then they were gone.

The 88<sup>th</sup> species for the Inyokern ponds was a **Cackling Goose** on Mar 23 (SS).

The two male **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at the ponds Mar 15 were a month earlier than our previous spring records (SS).

An **Osprey** was S of Inyokern Mar 25 (BS).

The **Peregrine Falcon** in Sand Canyon was the 140<sup>th</sup> species for that location (BBu).

The 250 **Turkey Vultures** over Ridgecrest Mar 18 are an indication of the numbers that are now moving north (DP).

The **Virginia's Rail** heard in Sand Canyon Mar 23 was only the 2<sup>nd</sup> record for that location (JC, BBu).

The 283<sup>rd</sup> species for the ponds was the **Eurasian Collared-Dove** on Mar 26 which continues its rapid expansion (SS).

Mating **Nuttall's Woodpeckers** were seen in Sand Canyon on Mar 23 during a SEEP field trip (JC, BBu, SE).

A **Cactus Wren** was SW of Inyokern through Mar 10 (LK).

Our over wintering **Oak Titmouse** were last seen at the cemetery Feb 6 (BB) and S of Inyokern Feb 28 (BS).

**Vesper Sparrows** are regularly seen in the fall, but spring records are harder to come by. The one S of Inyokern Mar 31 was the 5<sup>th</sup> spring record (SS).

A **Black-chinned Sparrow** was in Sweetwater Wash in the Argus Mts on Mar 31 (DLaB).

First of Spring (FOS) sightings for: **Lesser Nighthawk** Mar 29 at the ponds (JC), **Rufous Hummingbird** Mar 14 SW of Inyokern, **Vermilion Flycatcher** Mar 20 at the golf course (JC), **Western Kingbird** Mar 20 at the golf course (JC), **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** Mar 13 at the ponds (SS), **Cliff Swallow** Mar 20 at the ponds

(SS), **Barn Swallow** Mar 28 at the ponds (SS), **House Wren** Mar 12 SW of Inyokern (LK), **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** Mar 27 Mt Springs Canyon (DLaB), **Common Yellowthroat** Mar 27 Mt Springs Canyon (DLaB), **Wilson's Warbler** Mar 27 Sand Canyon (BBu), **Chipping Sparrow** Mar 31 Argus Mts (DLaB), **Lark Sparrow** Mar 9 SW of Inyokern (LK), **Fox Sparrow** Mar 14 SW of Inyokern (LK), **Lincoln's Sparrow** Mar 7 at the ponds (SS), **Hooded Oriole** Mar 16 N of Inyokern (LA), **Bullock's Oriole** Mar 18 SW of Inyokern (LK), **Scott's Oriole** Mar 31 Indian Wells Canyon (SS), **Yellow-headed Blackbird** Mar 13 ponds—new early date for the valley (SS).

The last report of **Mountain Bluebirds** was the three at the cemetery Mar 8 (BB).

## April

A **Common Loon** was at the ponds Apr 11 (SS).

An **Osprey** was at the ponds Apr 13 (SS) and another was in Mt Springs Canyon Apr 15 (DLaB). There are 90 records of this species in the valley with dates ranging from Feb 13 to Jun 12 in the spring and July 27 to Nov 3 in the fall with about 2/3 of the records from the spring.

Two **Swainson's Hawks** were found Apr 2. The first was on base (SS), the other S of Inyokern (JLD). Another was at the old sewage ponds Apr 15 (BB). This is a very good showing of this species this spring as there are only 20 records for the valley.

A **Long-billed Curlew** was at the golf course Apr 13 (BS).

A **Herring Gull** was at the ponds Apr 10 and 12 (SS).

The 185<sup>th</sup> species for the golf course was the **Eurasian Collared Dove** on Apr 11 (SS).

**Common Poorwill** is presumed to be resident in the valley from the end of March through October, but there are very few records. The one noted in the Argus Mts Apr 8 was only our 30<sup>th</sup> report (DLaB).

Two **Calliope Hummingbirds** were S of Inyokern Apr 10-13 (SS). Of the 36 records of this species in the valley, 24 are from this location.

The 10<sup>th</sup> valley record of **Plumbeous Vireo** was from Mt Springs Canyon Apr 14 (DLaB).

A **Belted Kingfisher** was at the ponds Apr 4 (SS).

The 143<sup>rd</sup> species for the Sutton's yard was **Bell's Vireo** on Apr 10 (L&ShS).

B Mt is not typical habitat for **Stellar's Jay**, but one was there Apr 4 (JC).

The **House Wren** at the cemetery Apr 4 was the 172<sup>nd</sup> species for that location (BB).

The 284<sup>th</sup> species for the ponds was **Golden-crowned Kinglet** on Apr 3 (SS).

The **Sage Thrasher** at the old sewage ponds Apr 15 was the second latest spring record for the valley (BB). This species is usually gone by early April.

The **Lazuli Bunting** in a Ridgecrest yard Apr 13 was a new yard bird and FOS for the species (BBu).

FOS for **Black-chinned Hummingbird** Apr 8 SE Ridgecrest, **Hammond' Flycatcher** Apr 1 Argus Mts (DLaB, SS), **Gray Flycatcher** was Apr 11 at the golf course (SS), **Dusky Flycatcher** Apr 8 SE Ridgecrest (L&ShS), **Cassin's Vireo** Apr 14 Mt Springs Canyon (DLaB), **Swainson's Thrush** Mar 17 SE Ridgecrest (L&ShS), **Violet-green Swallow** Apr 3 at the ponds (SS), **Bank Swallow** Apr 9 at the ponds (SS), **Brewer's Sparrow** Apr 1 Argus Mts (DLaB, SS), **Nashville Warbler** Apr 9 at Lark Seep (SS), **Black-throated Gray Warbler** Apr 9 SW of Inyokern (LK), **MacGillivray's Warbler** Apr 2 in Ridgecrest (JS), **Black-headed Grosbeak** Apr 13 SW of Inyokern (LK).

*Thanks to the following observers: Linda Andrews, Bob Barnes, Brenda Burnett, Jeff Coker, Jon Dunn, Shelley Ellis, Louise Knetch, Denise LaBerteaux, Doug Price, Joyce Seibold, Bob Steele, Lee and Shirley Sutton*

## CONSERVATION CORNER

by Terri Middlemiss

When I went to Wisconsin last fall, I visited the International Crane Foundation where they are successfully working with Whooping Cranes to increase the population of the endangered wild crane groups. I joined them and so I receive their newsletter.

The February issue reports on one of their "firsts." To quote "The Bugle" – "The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP) celebrated another success this year when the "First Family" arrived at their winter territory in Florida. Whooping Crane number W1-06 is the first wild-hatched chick in the eastern migratory population and the first to complete the fall migration by following her parents, numbers 11-02 and 17-02. The family began migration from Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin on November 19, and remained at their first migration stop in Vermillion County, Indiana, until they resumed migration on December 7. Two

days later they arrived at the Chassahowitz National Wildlife Refuge pensite in Florida where they stayed to roost. On December 10, they left the refuge and flew to the winter territory of" their parents.

"This one event is what all of us involved in this reintroduction project have been working towards – the countless hours, achievements, disappointments and frustrations, along with time away from family and friends – have led to this milestone in endangered species recovery. Congratulations to all WCEP partners and supporters!"

There are now 81 Whooping Cranes in the eastern migratory population.

I like success stories and knowing about all of these hard-working people and people like us, who support their work. It helps to balance all the grim news we receive about wildlife species floundering in this continuing degradation of the natural world.

One of our local success stories is the Kern River Preserve. Consider becoming a Friend of the KRP and receiving their excellent newsletter. The latest issue contains ways in which we can participate to help the success of this bird-rich preserve.

They always need volunteers to pick up litter, plant trees, remove invasive weeds, post signs, plant shrubs, plan festivals, fill bird feeders, repair canals, and on and on. Something for everybody. They are working with grant money to help hatchling Southwestern Pond Turtles get a "head start" in life by being held in a special pond until they are large enough to survive predation.

Everyone has talents that the Preserve could use. If you have the time to share - and it is only a 45-minute drive to this world class Preserve even if you live in Ridgecrest – make the effort. You will be rewarded many times over.

Friends of the Kern River Preserve, P.O. Box 833, Weldon CA 93283-0833.  
[krpfriends@lightspeed.net](mailto:krpfriends@lightspeed.net), [www.kern.Audubon.org](http://www.kern.Audubon.org)

## GARAGE SALE/SWAP MEET

Contributions of **items are still needed** for the annual Garage Sale, which this year will be at the Maturango Museum Swap Meet on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

All the usual gadgets and used items are welcome, with the exception of clothing, except clothing on hangers.

We also need help pricing and getting ready at 735 W Sonja Ave. on Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Call Brenda at 375-8634 for directions, and to sign up!

Dear Kerncrest Audubon Society Members and Supporters,

It's BIRDATHON time again! This is your opportunity to support environmental education and habitat protection in the Indian Wells Valley and Eastern Kern County.

Sunday, May 6<sup>th</sup> will be our annual Birdathon -- a time intrepid birders brave terrible weather (or not ) to earn contributions to support Kerncrest Audubon's education programs and the Kern River Preserve.

In previous years teams spread out all over the Indian Wells Valley and the Kern River Plateau to spot some 190 species. We're doing this a little later this year, and don't know if that will result in more species, or fewer. The migration seems to be well under way, so let's hope for 200 species!

Here's what we'll do with the money:

Volunteers from Kerncrest Audubon have continued leading the Junior Audubon Club at Faller School this year under the sponsorship of a wonderful 5<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher, Annie Jorgensen. The group this year is over 25 enthusiastic 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> graders! Last year, we had enough money to buy each of them a personal bird book. We'd love to be able to do that again.

A Junior Audubon Club has also formed at Richmond School under the sponsorship of Kim Van Nevel! With two clubs going, we need to spend some money on project idea books and Audubon Adventures to help with developing curriculum.

We also annually replace a few of the binoculars used for Junior Audubon and for the Sand Canyon Environmental Education Program (SEEP).

In years past, the Birdathon has earned about \$2,000, so the half that was pledged to the Kern River Preserve was about \$1,000. Last year, the total raised was well under that. Let's work hard to raise the usual \$2,000, so we can again split the proceeds evenly between the Preserve and our valuable education programs!

Here's what you can do:

#### **PARTICIPATE.**

Sign up for a Birdathon Team. Enter your own name and contribution on your pledge sheet, and sign up friends and acquaintances, too. Collect pledges and/or contributions from those making lump sum contributions, and bring them to the Birdathon. E-mail Lee Sutton at [2roadrunner@verizon.net](mailto:2roadrunner@verizon.net) or call 375 1981 to sign up and for information.

#### **CONTRIBUTE.**

Fill out your pledge sheet, either with a lump sum or per-species pledge, and mail it to Kerncrest Audubon Society, PO Box 984, Ridgecrest CA 93556. If you have pledged a lump sum, you are invited to send it in with your pledge sheet. Otherwise, someone will call you after the event and inform you of the number of species seen and your calculated contribution. All contributors will receive a report of the event and a list of species seen.

#### **BE GENEROUS.**

Anything you contribute will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lee Sutton, Birdathon Coordinator